



The Motif of the Separating Sword in World Art and Literature: A Study of Its Origins and Development

Mary Brockington

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This book is a re-examination of 'the Separating Sword' that demonstrates the complexity of intertextual influences across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The Separating Sword motif (Thompson motif T 351) has traditionally been used by a wide variety of narrators of texts, oral and literary, verbal and visual, generally to indicate a chaste relationship between a couple sleeping together. Examples found scattered in motif indexes and other sources have been brought together in this book and listed, and a new one identified. Theories of the symbol's origin in Indic sources are discounted. Instead, the motif's development is traced showing how the Separating Sword evolved from an image of physical separation to becoming specialized in Semitic tradition as a symbol of chaste wooing and celibate marriage. It took on radically different significance - adultery and discovery - consequent on its use in the Tristan romances, the ambiguity thus gained being further enriched by its simultaneous function as a phallic symbol.

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